H. Junod M-S (1875-1909) 1927 Thonga

197 and Moselekatsi amalgamated clans and tribes under their military rule, and could not subsist unless they maintained a despotic domination over them ; they were an aristocratic race and considered their language as superior. Ruling by fear and by the sword, they purposely remained aliens amongst the enslaved tribes. Quite different was the spirit of the ancient invaders of 1400 or 1500 A. D. They had not such an ideal of vast domination ; they operated on a much smaller scale : they were satisfied to take the chieftainship from the aborigines, and quickly mingled with them, married their daughters (as they still do) and so became one with them.

Would the Ba-Ngoni have been able, in course of time, to establish their Zulu dialect instead of the Thonga, if the Portuguese had not broken their power ? It is impossible to say. They had succeeded in imposing all their Zulu terminology in military matters. Meanwhile the women were not learning Zulu and the women are the best safeguards of the purity of the language amongst primitive peoples. Therefore I do not think they would have been able to uproot the old language, which must have been spoken for many centuries in Thonga territory.

My conclusion is then that the Thonga language was already spoken by the primitive occupants of the country more than 500 years ago and that, together with a certain number of customs, it formed the great bond which bound the Thonga clans together in past centuries.

181 703 2) *Mental characteristics of the Thongas.* We shall only ask how the Thongas compare with the Zulus or Suthos as regards character, and especially from a military point of view.

Having had the opportunity to witness a war in which the Nkuna chief Muhlaba was allied with the Pedi chief Maaghe, in the Zoutpansberg, I can testify that the Thongas had ten times as much military spirit

Phot. C. Liengme
"subdued" Thonga warrior.

the Pedis. I saw the two armies, the same day, preparing for the same battle. The Thongas were armed to the teeth, forming a great circle, all standing, shouting their war songs, gesticulating, jumping, imploring their chief to allow them to start. The Pedi warriors were sitting under trees, taking their snuff and apparently as calm as any other day.

During the Gungunyane war, the Thongas were brave, at least those not entirely dependent on the Ngoni king, who had not allowed his warriors to kill white men. The Rongas of Mpfumu especially showed great courage and endurance, and those who served the Portuguese in their Angola war have been praised as being very steady and reliable.

On the other hand everything seems to prove that military ability is not an ancient feature of the Thonga character, and that it has been imparted to them by the Zulus, who taught them the art of fighting during the last century, pushing them to the front in their battles and calling them "Mabuyandlela," "those who open the way." Before the Ngoni invasion, the Thonga armies were ignorant of the *mukhumbi* viz. the armed circle of warriors which is the basis of the Zulu military system; (See Part IV) : they used to form themselves into a straight line and, in their battles, very few men were killed. They were normal Bantu clans, viz. people living peacefully, occasionally quarrelling with their neighbours. The idea of conquest, of vast dominion, the system of an armed nation which Chaka and his followers pursued, was something new amongst South African Natives and was probably borrowed by Dingiswayo from the Whites. This fact ought not to be ignored.

Under a just European supervision, there is no probability that the Thonga tribe will change its peaceful and mild charcter.

3) *Physical characteristics of the Thongas.* It cannot be said that the Thongas possess a very distinct and unique physical type. They are generally of a dark brown colour, sometimes purely black, much darker than the Suthos. As a whole, their external appearance bears a much closer resemblance to that of the Zulus, but, as regards face and stature, they vary very much. You may meet Thongas with typical negro faces, broad lips, flat

643 seems to have been particularly feared. He had even bought
619 poison from white people and is said to have killed his rival, Musongi, chief of the Maputju clan, with whom he fought the battle of Malangotiba in 1870. He sent a woman of bad life to Maputju. The woman succeeded in winning the confidence of the king and poured this poison into his glass. Nowadays the Ronga chiefs have been taught by the Authorities to sit in council when discussing matters.

643 The two principal prerogatives of the chief are the right of *luma* and taxation.

III. *The right of luma, and the first fruits rites.*

181 We come to a set of rites which might be dealt with when
241 considering the Agricultural life, but I prefer to describe them here, as they provide us with a typical illustration of the constitution of the clan ; they are highly characteristic of the Bantu community, a community which is essentially agricultural in its pursuits, animistic in its beliefs, and hierarchic as regards its social and national life.

643 We have already met with the word *luma* and noticed that
262 its ordinary meaning is *to bite* ; its ritual sense is to *remove the*
784 *injurious character of a given food by a certain ceremony*. The luma
527 is a necessity before eating the flesh of certain wild beasts, as we
241 shall see when studying the laws of hunting (See Part IV). But it is of still more importance, and one of the great laws of the clan, that the official luma shall take place before the subjects eat the products of the new year. There seem to be two ideas at the root of this strange taboo :

1) To eat certain kinds of food is dangerous for one's health, and the first mouthful taken must be seasoned with the royal drug.

2) The gods, the chief, and elder brothers, have a prior right to enjoy the products of the soil. To precede them in doing this is a sin which would bring them misfortune. The hierarchy must be absolutely respected.

538 fables and stories. But may there not have been, in regard to the African tribes, some special circumstances which contributed to the development of this idea, and impelled them to give vent to it in a hundred different ways?

538 181 Among the Bantus, the Chief is all powerful. Surrounded by Counsellors, protected by warriors always ready to do his bidding, he is an autocrat with power of life and death over his subjects, especially where the primitive clan has evolved into a confederation of tribes united by military power. If the Bantu clan is in a sense democratic, the hierarchy is, nevertheless, all powerful in its midst. Before the Chief and before the invincible custom of which he is the representative, every one bows and trembles. In every village the headman possesses similar power over his subordinates, and elder brothers reign as despots over the younger. From the top to the bottom of the social ladder the strong dominate over the weak and combine, in a wonderful way, to assure the submission of the inferior. In the evening, round the fire, the women and the children take their revenge in the Black man's usual way, i. e., by saying what they think in a round-about manner. They do not try to upset the existing state of affairs. Far from it! But they take a malicious pleasure in telling of the clever tricks of the Hare and his associates! Why? Because Mr. Hare represents the little one, the subject, the ordinary private individual, who has received no special advantages, either by birth or from nature, and yet who, by his own personal wit or common sense, gets the better of the great ones of the community and even of the chiefs. Is it a mere coincidence that three of the tales I have collected conclude with the death of a chief brought about by the machiavellian astuteness of that rascal, the Hare? Or, sometimes, it is the youngest sister who figures in the story; the despised one, covered with a loathsome skin disease; the insignificant little goat-herd; the son of the neglected wife; all of whom accomplish great deeds, entirely unexpectedly.

538 I see in these stories, as it were, a discreet protest of weakness against strength, a protest of spiritual against material force; possibly they may contain a warning to those in power from those

2: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

the material representation of his personality. By this contact the patient has in a way become a part of the "complexus Bula" and what happens to the bones will also happen to him ; what is said by the bones will henceforth apply directly to him. This magic conception of Nature is probably the profound and secret reason why the diviners believe so firmly in their art.

On the other hand, this art is so perfect that bone-throwers can derive very great satisfaction from the practice of it. It must be born in mind that, in fact, all the elements of Native life are represented by the objects contained in the basket of divinatory bones. It is a resumé of their whole social order, of all their institutions, and the bones, when they fall, provide them with an instantaneous picture of all that may befall them. This system is so elaborate that I do not hesitate to say that, together with their language, their folklore, their lobola customs and their burial rites, it is the product of their psychic life which shows most intelligence. If the premises of divination are accepted, astragalomancy seems to me vastly superior to cheiromancy and all the other systems which have been invented by us. It is also superior to the divination by four tablets of ivory or wood practised by a certain number of South African tribes, a description of which will be found in Appendix VI (1).

But if this system of divination is a proof of great intelligence, it must be confessed that *its results*, as shown in the psychic life of the tribe,

(1) There are some grounds for thinking that divination by astragalus bones is very old in the history of mankind. The Greeks practised *astragalomancy*. In a paper to which I shall refer in App. VI, the Rev. N. Roberts mentions the temple of Dodone, in which, according to Cicero, there was a large brass basin with the statue of a man upon it, and this man held in his hands a whip with three straps from which hung small astragalus bones. When these bones were set in motion by the wind, they struck against the basin and the sounds thus produced had a prophetic character. This was astragalomancy, but of a very different kind from that just described. Aristotle makes frequent allusions to the astragalus bone and says, inter alia, that one of its sides, named *coon*, represents the figure 6 ; another, named *chion*, the figure 1, etc. This shows that in his time the astragalus bone was already identified with the dice. The dice, also called *αστραγαλος* in Greek is simply an astragalus bone whose sides have been cut so as to form a perfect cube. We find traces of the use of the astragalus even further back in the past. Angelo Mosso, quoted by the same author, asserts that he found many astragalus in Italy, where they were used in connection with primitive religion as far back as the neolithic period. The discovery in the lake of Neuchâtel of a collection of more than thirty astragalus in the lake dwellers' station of Auvernier may be a proof that these bones did in truth play a part in the customs of primitive humanity. If this is so, then the Bantus have preserved the astragalus as they did the wooden pillow of the old Egyptians, the ancestrolatry of the Mousterians and the "mbaya" (p. 93) of the Libyans. The astragalus is still employed in play to represent cattle by Swiss children in the Canton of Valais, and I am told that the South African Boers have the same custom, and call these bones dol-ose.